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XXIV.—*Ethnological Notes on M. du Chaillu's "Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa."* By CAPT. RICHARD BURTON, F.S.E.

THE Ethnological Society doubtless retains a pleasant recollection of a paper upon the tribes of Western Equatorial Africa read on the 14th of May by our latest celebrity, the enterprising M. du Chaillu. It has been suggested to me by my friend Dr. Hunt that a few remarks upon the subject of the eastern races of the same continent would be not uninteresting as tending to prove that throughout the vast breadth of the peninsula, the same language, the same manners and customs, the same religion and tone of thought—briefly the same ethnic development prevails. My approaching departure, *en route* for lands adjoining those first laid open by the author of the "*Gorilla Book*," leaves me but scanty time for any but a cursory glance at the subject, and may serve to excuse me for incoherence and want of polish of style.

I begin by remarking the superiority of the Mpongwe race to those occupying about the same latitude on the eastern coast. The American mission at Baraka and in Corisco administers, we are told, lessons in "geography, arithmetic, history, writing, and English." The Nuremberg mission, established by Dr. Krapf in 1844 among the Wanyika, has, with equal zeal, by no means been equally successful. Boys who persisted despite their brother imps in frequenting the schoolroom, with its glorious show of black boards and white chalk, were at once dubbed Mpumbafu or ——— fools. When I visited the mission in 1858, Mr. Rebmann, the sole remaining member, showed me the only remaining convert, one Apekunja, who, I was naïvely informed, had been prepared for the "true faith" by a five year attack of idiocy brought on by the loss of all his relatives. The superior degeneracy of the eastern tribes may be explained by the prevalence of the slave trade in the most ancient times. The Periplus, attributed to Arrian, which was certainly not written after A.D. 200, proves that Greek factories were then established along the coast, and that the "largest bodies" were brought from the regions around the modern Kilwa. In a paper published by the Royal Geographical Society (*Journal* for 1860), I have given in detail my reasons for believing that the ill-fated eastern coast was well known as a human hunting-ground to the Arabs in the "*Days of Ignorance*," and to the Persians when they were still fire-worshippers.

The trading difficulties in the east are a counterpart of those in the west. For instance, the Wakamba, living fourteen

marches north-west of Mombasa, have ever been obliged to use the Wanyika as middlemen, and, as might be expected, have been pitiaibly cheated. The injurious "trust system" extends not only to the semi-Semitic Somal, but also to the coffee trade of Southern Arabia. The tedious hours of chaffering are the same on both coasts, and I believe throughout the interior: time is not money in Africa. M. du Chaillu has known several days to be spent in selling a single ivory. I have seen an expenditure of six weeks. The West African traveller's remarks, concerning the commercial shrewdness and eagerness, the greediness and rascality of the negro, apply to him everywhere in his natural state. Rum and tobacco, clothing and ornaments, arms and gunpowder, have become necessities to the coast races; they *will* have them, and unless they can supply themselves by means of licit they naturally fly to illicit commerce. Gold, iron, copper and other metals; palm and other oils; copal, caoutchouc and other gums; tusks, dye woods and timber; hides, coffee, sugar-cane, and last, but not least, cotton—these will be the real civilizers of Africa. It is pleasant to remark that some of those "Mpongwe fellows" have worked out the dogma that "honesty is the best policy," despite threats of poison and charges of witchcraft. The eastern races have never dreamed it in the moments of their wildest imagination.

Another trait familiar to me is the following. When Njogoni, a good royal friend of M. du Chaillu, was, after a fashion which civilized modern Europe seems to have borrowed from savage Africa, voted king, he underwent a peculiar preliminary to investiture. Some spat in his face, others beat him with their fists; some kicked him, others pelted him with abominations; whilst the unfortunates who could not join in this exhilarating exercise assiduously cursed him, his brothers and sisters, his parents, grandparents, and his remotest ancestors. When an especially severe cuff or toeing was applied, the applicant exclaimed, "You are not our king yet; for a little while we will do what we please with you. By and by we shall have to do your will." To show the absolute identity of custom in Unyamwezi—the Land of the Moon—I will quote verbatim from the account of my last journey to the Lake Regions of Central Africa (vol. ii, p. 31). "The chief" (Fundikira of Unyamwezi) "was travelling towards the coast as a porter in a caravan: when he heard of his father's death, he at once stacked his load and prepared to return home and rule. The rest of the gang, before allowing him to depart, beat him severely, exclaiming partly in jest, partly in earnest, 'Ah! now thou art still our comrade, but presently thou wilt torture, slay, fine, and flog us.'" It may be satisfactory to know that

under these trying circumstances—more trying than the “piling” of a London club—Njogoni and Fundikira both bore themselves like men and prospective monarchs.

The other habits in which the Mpongwe so nearly resemble the eastern tribes are their gross festivities with gorging and hard drinking, their contempt for those whom they can victimize in the merest trifle, their intense love of meat, and suffering from “guamba”—a word which merits naturalization—their polygamy and their concealing the deaths of their chiefs, their attributing all illness to witchcraft, their “keening” and shedding tears without grief, their barbarous habits of speechifying, their lengthy leave takings, their ceremonious starting on voyages, their shipbuilding—if such word can be applied to their cockleshells—their tedious salutations, their appropriating a peculiar dress to chiefs, their agriculture by means of hoes—the plough has never been known south of the equator—their improvidence, and their practice of cultivating only those plantations that are distant from their villages. I am pleased to see that M. du Chaillu has found exceptions to the general rule of idleness and chicanery, and to read as follows: “the very fact that a white man could travel alone, single handed, and without powerful backers, through this rude country without being molested or robbed, is sufficient evidence that the negro race is not unkindly natured.” I believe that an abnormal development of adhesiveness, in popular language a peculiar power of affection, is the brightest spot in the negro character; as in children, it is somewhat tempered by caprice, especially under excitement, yet it has entitled him to the gratitude of many a traveller.

M. du Chaillu's account of oratory among the Mbúshá struck me at once as familiar. He says, “The speaker delivers himself in short sentences, each containing one of the many hundred memorable facts of the day's journey. All sit round silent and open mouthed, and at intervals the chief men give little grunts of approbation.” Compare this with my account of a Somali speech (*First Footsteps in East Africa*, p. 189).

“The listeners sit gravely in a semicircle upon their heels, with their spears, from whose bright heads flashes a ring of troubled light, planted upright, and look stedfastly on his (the speaker's) countenance over the upper edges of their shields with eyes apparently planted like those of the Blemmyes in their breasts. When the moment for delivery is come, the head man inquires, ‘What is the news?’ The informant would communicate the important fact that he has been to the well; he proceeds as follows, noting emphasis by raising his voice, at times about six notes, and often violently striking with his spear at the ground in front.

“ ‘ It is good news, if Allah please !’

“ ‘ Wa sidda !—even so !’—respond the listeners, intoning, or rather groaning the response.

“ ‘ I mounted mule this morning !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ I departed from you riding !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ *There*’ (with a scream, and pointing out the direction with his spear.)—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ *There* I went !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ I threaded the wood !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ I traversed the sands !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ I feared nothing !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ At last I came upon cattle tracks !’—‘ Hoo ! hoo ! ! hoo ! ! !’ (an ominous pause follows this exclamation of astonishment.)

“ ‘ They were fresh !’—Even so.’

“ ‘ So was the earth !’—Even so.’

“ ‘ I distinguished the feet of women !’—Even so.’

“ ‘ But there were no camels !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ At last I saw sticks !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ Stones !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ Water !’—‘ Even so.’

“ ‘ A well ! ! !’

“ Then follows the palaver, wherein as occasionally happens nearer home, he most distinguishes himself who can rivet the attention of an audience for at least an hour without saying anything in particular.”

The western traveller remarks the ceremoniousness of the barbarian in these terms: “ Then began the ‘salutation,’ a tedious formality among the African tribes which our American people seem to copy in their ‘public receptions’ of distinguished or notorious men.”

As a pendant to this I extract the following passage from “ Zanzibar, and Two Months in East Africa,” certain papers published by me in *Blackwood's Magazine* of 1858.

“ Two Sawahali have met ; let us listen to the lengthy greetings exchanged.

“ ‘ A. Yámbo ?’ (the state.)

“ ‘ B. Yámbo sáná !’ (the state is good.)

“ ‘ A. I seize the feet !’

“ ‘ B. How hast thou eaten and slept ?’

“ ‘ A. I have made my reverential bow.’

“ ‘ B. Yámbo ?’

“ ‘ A. It is good !’

“ ‘ B. Like unto gold ?’

“ ‘ A. Like unto gold !’

“ ‘ B. Like unto coral ?’

“ ‘ A. Like unto coral !’

“ ‘ B. Like unto pearl ?’

“ ‘ A. Like unto pearl !’

“ ‘ B. In happiness, Kwaheri !’ (farewell !)

“ ‘ A. In happiness let us meet if Allah please !’

“ ‘ B. Hum !’

“ ‘ A. Hum !’ (drawn out like the German’s so-o-o)”

With respect to the horrid cannibalism of the Fans it forms no exception to the rule usually laid down respecting anthropophagy. The so called unnatural practice is ever most prevalent in those places where, as in New Zealand, animal food is deficient. The damp and depressing atmosphere of equatorial Africa renders the stimulus of flesh diet necessary. The “guamba” appears not to have spared *M. du Chaillu* any more than it did his sable guides, and although he had the moral courage to resist the “gastronomic caprice” of breakfasting off a fat young slave, one could hardly expect so much from the untutored mind of the so termed “noble savage.” On the eastern parts of the continent there are two cannibal tribes, the Wadoe and the Wabembe. The former occupy the same position upon the Barbaricus Sinus assigned by Ptolemy, (lib. iv, c. 8), to his anthropophagi. According to their own legend, however, the practice is modern ; when weakened by the attacks of their neighbours, the Wakamba, they began to roast and eat slices from the bodies of the fallen, in presence of the foe, who daring to die but unable to face the idea of becoming food, fled the country. Many of the Wadoe are tall and well-made negroes ; light complexioned, although inhabiting the low and humid coast regions—a proof, if any were wanted, that there is nothing radically unwholesome in their *ménu*. The Wabembe occupy a strip of land on the north-western shore of the Tanganyika Lake. These “menschen-fresser,” as they were rightly designated by the authors of the *Mombas Mission Map*, have abandoned to wild growth a land of the richest and the most prolific soil ; too lazy and unenergetic to fish or hunt, they devour all kinds of carrion, grubs and insects, and like the Fans are not disgusted by the worst form of cannibalism—eating the bodies of persons who have died of sickness. The Midgan or slave caste of the semi-Semitic Somal are sometimes reduced by hunger to this dire extremity, but they are ever held, like the Wendigo or man-eaters among the North American Indian tribes, impure and detestable.

*M. Du Chaillu* has rightly defined polygamy in Africa as a political rather than a domestic or social institution. A “judicious culture of the marriage tie” is necessary amongst savages and barbarians, where, unlike Europe, a man’s rela-

tions and connections are his only friends; besides which, a multitude of wives ministers to his pride and influence, state and pleasure. As customary amongst polygamists, from Moslem to Mormon, there is a head wife—usually the first married. When the mistress of the house ages, she takes charge of the girlish brides who are placed by her husband under her guardianship. I should attempt in vain to persuade the English woman that there can be peace in a household so constituted. Such, however, is the case. M. du Chaillu distinctly says, “I have found that the wives rarely disagree among themselves.” The feelings become greatly modified; the alliance becomes one of interest rather than of affection, and the underlying idea, “the more the merrier,” especially in lands where free service is unknown, seems to annihilate envy and jealousy. Everywhere, moreover, amongst polygamists the husband is strictly forbidden to show preference for a favourite wife; if he do so, he is a bad man; if he act with impartiality, his conduct is approved of. The other point in which the eastern resemble the western tribes of Africa is the paying goods or slaves for the bride, who is disposed of (as, I am told, sometimes happens among the highly civilized) to the longest rent-roll. Quarrels and wars about the sex are common throughout Africa; yet there is the greatest laxity of morals. In the east and in the west the son succeeds by inheritance to his father’s wife, who being generally an old woman, is condemned to be useful as she can no longer be ornamental: when there are several, they are divided amongst the heirs. The African woman holds a high social position: no questions are put concerning her children; despite the hide-peacemaker she gets tipsy, and she dances with all her might a very peculiar fandango. In Unyamwezi, as in the Ashira country, a husband seldom interferes with the property which he has made over to his wife, and she guards her rights with a truly feminine love and jealousy. The women cultivate and plant the ground, and after feeding their husbands, expend the surplus products in the beads and baubles which compose their bijouterie. The Bakalari, like the Somal, will not marry a woman of the same family or clan as themselves; a similar institution is observable amongst the North American Indians, who reject all of the same totem. The idea is doubtless the danger of consanguinity; for most Africans, who will not take to wife a fiftieth cousin, will marry, like the Jews, their brothers’ widows. Another custom familiar to me is the descent and inheritance through the female line—the “surer side”: it is practised in Malabar, and in Zanzibar, and extends through most savage people. In the east as in the west of Africa, the uncle has an interest in the sisters’

children: when they are sold, he claims his per centage, and in some tribes he is permitted to dispose of them, whereas the parents are not. Thus, on these occasions, speaks the *vox populi vox Dei*, "What, is the man to go hungry when he has a sister's brat to sell?"

The gorilla is sufficiently connected with the Ethnological Society to deserve a few words of notice. One book informs us that the first discovery has been claimed for Hanno, the Carthaginian (*Periplus*, ch. 18), and that the earliest word was "Γορίλλαι," a term applied by the ἑρμῆνες or native interpreters. The learned Klugius has unwisely noted "sive dubio ea est simiarum species quæ orang-outang vocatur." M. du Chaillu proposes, unsatisfactorily enough I think, to read chimpanzee. The islanded island-lake described for the old Tyrian is apparently apocryphal; but his account of the anthro-poid's ferocity is peculiarly appropriate. I venture to suggest that the word gorilla was a Grecised form after the true classic fashion of an African root: our author calls it in the Mpongwe dialect "ngina," and in the Mbusha "nguyla," which might most naturally have become "gorilla."

The religion of the Africans is ever interesting to those of a maturer faith, as the study of childhood is pleasing to those of riper years. Orthodoxically, I believe Fetissism is held to be a degradation of the pure and primitive Adamical dispensation, even as the negro is supposed to represent the accursed and degraded descendants of Ham and Canaan. I cannot, however, but look upon Fetissism as the first dawn of a belief in things not seen. My description of it, which is repeated from the *Lake Regions of Central Africa*, is as follows—"It is the adoration, or rather the propitiation, of natural objects animate and inanimate, to which certain mysterious influences are attributed. It admits neither God, nor angel, nor devil; it ignores the very alphabet of revealed or traditionary religion—a creation, a resurrection, a judgment day, a soul or a spirit, a heaven or a hell; it has not yet learned to look forward to rivers of rum, mountains of meat, and wives by thousands. A modified practical atheism is thus the prominent feature of the superstition. Though instinctively conscious of a being beyond them, of a first cause to every effect subject to their senses, the Africans have as yet failed to grasp the idea: in their feeble minds it is an embryo rather than an object—at the best a vague god, without personality, attributes or providence. They call that being Mulungu—the Uhlunga of the Kafirs, and the Utita of the Hottentots. The term, however, may mean a ghost, the firmament, or the sun; a man will frequently name himself Mulungu, and even Mulungu Mbaya, the latter word signifying bad or wicked. In



the language of the Wamasai "Ai," or with the article "Engai"—the Creator—is feminine, god and rain being synonymous.

The tribes described by our author have advanced one step beyond their western brethren. No longer contented with mere fetisses or charms, in which the dreaded ghost is bound or laid, they have invented mbuiti or idols, a manifest progress towards that polytheism and pantheism which lead through the triad and duality of deities to monotheism, the apex of the spiritual edifice. In Eastern Africa I know but one people, the Wanyika, who have certain statuettes called kisukas; but they declare that these images came from the west where, in 1589, Andrew Battel found idols amongst the Giagas or Jagas. In one point the east and west surely resemble each other—the ignoble dread of a death which leads to annihilation. Counting on nothing after the present life, there is for them no hope beyond the grave, they wail and sorrow with a burden of despair. "Amekwisha"—"he is finished"—is the East African's last word concerning parent or friend. "All is done for ever" sing the West Africans. The least allusion to loss of life makes their black skins pale; "Ah," they exclaim, "it is bad to die, to leave house and home, wife and children, no more to wear soft cloth, nor eat meat, nor drink tobacco." "Ah," said an unfortunate moribund to our author, with a shudder, "never speak of that!" meaning death. Such is the ever-present horror of their "dreadful and dreary lives."

Fetissism is a faith which must be studied by casting off all our preconceived ideas. The Africans, for instance, believe in ghost, but not in spirit; in a present immaterial, but not in a future: we are disposed to expect from them a metempsychosis or transmigration of souls, whereas they have nothing beyond the material metamorphosis of which Ovid sang. Their man-gorilla, for instance, is the French loup garou, and the man-leopard of Abyssinia is the man-hyæna of the Somal. It is intelligible English to say that they have charms for casting out the *devil*; but the truth is they have no devil. Sathanas in Africa is some ghost who has made himself unusually unpopular to the multitude; being very wicked he is naturally much worshipped. When the savages believed M. du Chaillu to be a mbuiri or spirit, they meant that he was a *revenant*, consequently a subject of fear and awe.

I will now briefly glance at the remaining salient points of ethnic similarity between Eastern and Western Africa. The languages are clearly of the same family; the syntax is one, and in the Mpongwe many of the words are familiar to me. They belong to that great South African group whose

specialities are euphonic alliteration and the inflection of words by preformatives. M. du Chaillu's failure in reaching the cataract of Samba Nagoshi when he heard its roar is perfectly characteristic: I was within sight of the Tangaryika's head, and yet could not reach it. Twins are killed, either singly or in pairs, almost throughout the pagan part of the continent. The habit of smoking the cannabis is the same. M. du Chaillu omits to enumerate Northern and Southern Africa amongst the places—Abyssinia, Persia, and Hindostan—where he says the plant is indigenous; it grows wild throughout the country, but the people cultivate it because its qualities are thereby improved. The style of dyeing by fixing colour with clay, the pottery worked without a lathe, the loom for weaving employed by men, the iron tobacco pipes, the handleless hammer, and the peculiar double-handed bellows, are everywhere the same. I recognise the force of ridicule upon the negro's childlike mind, his hatred to be laughed at, his mild jokes, and his fitful merriment, and his wayward gloom. The habit of tasting food and water before the guests is a general custom; the fearful prevalence of poisoning accounts for it. The Mbundu, or narcotic poison of ordeal, extends wide over the country, and the medical man is everywhere probably a Mithridates. As among the Bakalari, so amongst the Somal, a lie shows itself in a man's face: after a month's practice I never failed to read the working of the features. The African's peculiar courage has evidently excited our author's curiosity; he remarks their bravery in the hunt, and their genuine and never-failing cowardice in the fight, and that, having little to lose, they most dread the loss of life. In all my travels I have observed the same; it is only the civilised man that can throw away life as if he could recover it. The medicine man, who is a rain maker in the arid regions of the south, is a rain stopper in the uncomfortable wet climates of the centre and the west. The system of "roondah" or forbidden meats has been noticed by Dr. Livingstone and by myself in the tribes through whom we passed. The plague of flies and ants, which some have deemed exaggerated, has been portrayed by all of us: the tsetse (*glossina morsitans*), that worst of pests to the brute creation, appears not to reach the equator in Western Africa. I have heard of, but was unable to identify, the "ivory eater" alluded to in the explorer's sixteenth chapter. In East Africa the kendo or bell is not the insignia of kingship, but it is extensively used by ivory carriers, the chiefs of the caravan; the waganga, or witch doctors, also wear strings of kiungi, or little bells. The eldest son of a chief lives abroad in many African tribes, because at home he is most likely to kill his father.

The rights of monopoly are sacred throughout the negro race, as amongst us the strongest takes and keeps them. The stereotyped answer to all deprecations of witch burning and wizard spearing, "there may be no magic among you whites; but it is very different among us, because we have known many men who were bewitched and died," is familiar to Asia as to Africa: whenever I spoke contemptuously to a Moslem of his Jinns, or to a Hindu of his rakhshasas, the rejoinder invariably was, that white men are by nature so hot that even the fiends fear them. The pride which the chief takes in his muzungu, ntangani, or white man, is characteristic of the African, who instinctively feels the superiority of his Arian congenor, often shows his sense of the honour by refusing the visitor—invariably deemed a Cræsus—access to the neighbours, lest the latter be puffed up by the distinction. When the chief dies slaves must be slain, and provisions, ornaments, arms, and valuables must be buried, that their "ebony kingships" may not be left alone or empty-handed in the grave; the same is practised by many tribes of North American Indians. I recognise the "fine quiet old-country pictures in the wilds of Africa," and have often described their effect upon me when emerging suddenly from the "immense virgin forests" or backwoods, upon the prairie "shining with a golden glory," and dotted over with grazing kine. The *mafuga*, or master of ceremonies, is an absurd personage—not only in Africa. "Early to bed, and early to rise" is not supposed to make a man healthy, wealthy and wise, by tribes that live in a primæval state, and who justly hold labour an evil inferior only to death. I have often heard the Somal palaver long after midnight, and as a rule the savage enjoys his night chat and smoke round the fire the more as he is in the habit of drinking and dozing through the day. In the West African as in the Eastern, exaggeration is the characteristic of the mind—it is probably the effect of the wild rank gigantic scenery upon the senses, the avenues of all human knowledge. Albinos are common in all tribes where they are not murdered: I have often been "chaffed" about a brother white who proved to be an exceptional negro without pigmentum nigrum. "Tomorrow" is a favourite word everywhere east of Europe: Asiatics and Africans invariably act upon the sometimes sensible precept "never do today what you can do tomorrow." The respect shown by the Mbicho to the new moon is not peculiar to them; the Wanyamwezi also hail the appearance of the lesser light, and even the Moslems, when they sight the crescent, ejaculate a brief prayer for blessings throughout the ensuing month.

The head, whether of man or beast, is a royalty amongst

almost all African tribes. The iron working of the Fans, by means of many successive heatings and hammerings, which, without other tempering, turns out an article very superior to that which is sent from Europe, is precisely similar to the handicraft of the Amazulu and the Somal, who call the best blades of Sheffield "rotten iron," because they chip and snap. In Central as in Western Africa the beard is plaited and beaded. I cannot recommend the practice to the philopogons of Europe; the Fan mustachios, however, you will observe are much copied during the present season. The *fortiter in re* is always and everywhere a *sine quâ non* in Africa. M. du Chaillu is compelled with his fists to pitch into the unworthy sons of king Mbene, who stole his plantains, and when he left Biangano to inform chief and people that if anything were stolen during his absence he would shoot the thief: even Dr. Livingstone, who travelled as a Christian missionary, he tells us, was obliged to keep his escort in order with his pistols. As our author truly says, "civilisation,"—police courts, and so forth—"is a very good thing in its way, but has no business in an African forest, where food is scarce."

After saying so much for the West African explorer, who has so unexpectedly and so agreeably appeared amongst us, I may perhaps be permitted to take exception to a single sin of omission in his entertaining work—the want of an exact orthography. For instance, the word Mshiego. If it is to be pronounced Mshigo, it wants no e; if Mshego, the i is *de trop*. The African as the Asiatic traveller should be expected to choose his system; it is no matter which, but it is essential that there should be one. That founded by Sir William Jones appears the best, because of the most general applicability; moreover, any corrector for the press could master it. It was preferred by our old Hebraists who translated the Pentateuch and the Prophets; they wrote Jerusalem, not Jeroosalem, or Jerousalem; and its essential value has been proved by the host of modern modifications proposed by savans and missionaries.

This paper will, I trust, satisfy the most querulous that M. du Chaillu has well and veraciously studied the new and curious races of whom he has treated. For myself, I must be allowed to offer him my best thanks; every page produces upon my mind the effect of the bugle upon the cast charger after a year or two in the cab-shafts of civilisation. And I venture to express a hope that at some future day I may be permitted to appear before the Ethnological Society as an eye-witness of, not merely an analogical testimony to, the truthfulness of the picturesque and varied pages which have caused such a sensation on both shores of the Atlantic.